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CORRUPT ELECTION PRACTICES IN ADAMS COUNTY, OHIO

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL POPULAR GOVERNMENT LEAGUE, HELD AT WASHINGTON, D. C., ON JANUARY 5 AND 6, 1917

By

JUDGE A. Z. BLAIR

PRESENTED BY MR. OWEN

FEBRUARY 24, 1917.—Referred to the Committee on Printing

WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 378.

Reported by Mr. Chilton.

In the Senate of the United States,
February 26, 1917.

Resolved, That the manuscript submitted by the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. Owen) on February 24, 1917, entitled "What Corrupt Practices in Elections Did in Adams County, Ohio," an address before the National Conference of the National Popular Government League, by Judge A. Z. Blair, be printed as a Senate document.

Attest:

James M. Baker,
Secretary.

WHAT CORRUPT PRACTICES IN ELECTIONS DID TO ADAMS COUNTY, OHIO.

Address before the National Conference of the National Popular Government League, Washington, D. C., January 5 and 6, 1917.

By Judge A. Z. Blair.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen:

It is my part in this conference to tell you something of the history of Adams County, Ohio, where, in 1910, out of a total of 6,505 electors, 1,691 were disfranchised for selling their votes, or 26 out of every 100 voters in that county. Notwithstanding this fact, I am here to-night to say to you that I am not ashamed of the fact that the best years of my life have been spent in that county. This corruption of the ballot was not the result of either ignorance or lack of patriotism among the citizenship, for there is no more intelligent, liberty-loving, patriotic body of citizens in this fair land of ours than is the citizenship of Adams County, Ohio. This condition existed in spite of the intelligence and patriotism of the citizens, and was the result and fruits of corrupt politics.

In order that you may comprehend the blighting influence of corrupt politics, it will be necessary to tell you something of the settlement and history of this county. It was a part of the great Northwest Territory from which was carved the great States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan. This territory in its early days was ruled by Gov. St. Clair, who was a politician. Like the politicians of the present time, he sought first to benefit himself, second his party, and last the dear people. Gov. St. Clair sought to impress a faith in his party on the early settlers in this great territory by giving Federal names to the settlements.

For instance, the first settlement in Ohio was by the Federalists from the New England States, at Marietta, to which he gave the name, Washington County, after the great Federal leader George Washington, Father of his Country.

The second settlement also was made by Federalists from New England, at Cincinnati; to this settlement he gave the name of Hamilton County in honor of Alexander Hamilton, the great Federal leader from New York.

The third settlement was made at Manchester by anti-Federalists from Virginia, led by Nathaniel Massie, a schoolmate of Thomas Jefferson; to this settlement Gov. St. Clair gave the name of Adams County in honor of President Adams, a strong Federal leader. It

must not be forgotten that Jefferson and Adams were bitter political enemies. These old Virginians, who had bared their breasts to British bullets in the Revolutionary War to give this county her independence, and who had braved the hardships and privations of a frontier life to establish homes for themselves and their loved ones in this western wild, inhabited by savage beasts and still more savage men, deeply resented being given the name of the political enemy of Thomas Jefferson, their political founder and teacher. They realized that if their political faith was to be established in this western empire, they must act promptly.

They sent a delegation to Jefferson and Madison to impress upon them the necessity of settling the Ohio Valley with the friends of their political faith, with the result that so many Virginians emigrated to Ohio, that in the election of delegates to establish its first constitution a majority of these delegates were followers of the faith of Jefferson and Madison. Thus it may be said that this early settlement of Adams County, Ohio, was the birthplace of democracy in the great Central West.

Not only did St. Clair insult these Virginia settlers by giving them a name which they resented, but he sought to still further impress them with the force and power of the Federal Party by establishing a village 10 miles north of Manchester, called West Union, and making it the county seat. From this it will be noticed that Adams County was born and organized amid political conflict.

The political activities of later years were intensified from the fact that the first great national highway, extending from the National Capital through this great western country, was Zane's Trace, leading from Wheeling, W. Va., directly through the center of Adams County, Ohio, to what was then known as Limestone, Ky., now known as Maysville.

In those early pioneer days the great political leaders from the South and West went to and from the National Capital in attending the session of Congress by stage coach, traveling through Adams County by Zane's Trace. There was located along this trace certain taverns or inns at which these noted men would stop and spend the night when on their journey. One of these, Treber's Tavern, still standing, was located down in Adams County, and was famous, made so from the fact that Mrs. Treber, the landlady, was a famous biscuit baker. The fame of her baking was known to the travelers using this route to the National Capital, and they all sought to make it a point to so arrange their starting that they would stay over night at Treber's Tavern.

The country folks knew of the times when these great men would be at this hostelry, and they would gather in for miles around and have a great political rally. My father and other men used to tell us boys about these rallies; about the speeches of Tom Benton, Henry Clay, and other like worthies. Men and boys who had been born amidst poverty and privations, who had gone through the school of hard knocks, at these great political rallies would hear the story of the struggle of political leaders in early life and the efforts they had put forth to attain the places that they held in public life. These men and boys went home from these meetings instilled with an ambition that the young men of that country should attain something in life. The boys saw these men, saw they looked just like

other men, and learned from them the story of their lives; that their attainments had been accomplished by labor, and resolved that they, too, would do something and be something as men. The result was that education in Adams County was prized as high as, if not higher than, in any other place in the Nation. The schools were crowded with young folks eagerly seeking an education, with an ambition to use all that was within them to be something in life, and as a result these schools have produced more educated men, according to population, than any other similar territory in the Nation.

From the original confines of Adams County we trace five United States Senators and eight governors, and when the martyred President, Abe Lincoln, bowed down with responsibility in conducting the Civil War, sought a leader for the Federal Army who might successfully cope with that wonderful general of the South, Robert E. Lee, where did he go? Down among the hills of the original Adams County and picked up "Unconditional Surrender Grant," who lead the northern armies to victory.

If we were to assemble the journalists of the present day and ask them who it was that gave the impetus to modern journalism, they would reply with one accord John A. Cockerel, who made the St. Louis Post Dispatch and the New York World famous, and whose eyes first beheld the light of day down in Adams County, Ohio. Ah, they would not stop here, they would point to that other magnificient model of journalism, Whitelaw Reid, whose parents lived just across the field from where John A. Cockerel was born. Time will not suffice to speak of the great men produced by this county. It has given to the Nation in teachers, preachers, lawyers, physicians, and educated men, more, according to the population, than other like territory in the Nation.

The impress of the character of the men of this county is written indelibly in the basic laws, not only of the State of Ohio, but practically of every Western State and of the Nation at large.

While the population of this county, up to the time of the Civil War, was largely Democratic, it was thoroughly patriotic. Lying, as did the county, on the border of Mason and Dixon's line between the conflicting political opinions of the North and South, it kept alive the fires of patriotism. When the guns of the South hurled their first shots against the walls of Fort Sumter in 1861 it was answered among the hills and valleys of old Adams County, Ohio, by the fife's shrill note and the drum's rolled beat calling her sons to arms. No county, save one, gave to the Federal Army a greater number of volunteer soldiers, according to population, than did Adams County, Ohio.

You ask why then, if this was the class of her citizenship, did they become so debauched and degraded? The answer is corrupt politics.

Let me tell you the story. The county, as we have seen, was born amid political warfare. Politics had largely maintained supremacy in the public thought by reason of these great men stopping at the hotels and addressing the populace, and the location of the county on Mason and Dixon's line. The stirring days of the Civil War intensified these deep seated political convictions of the people of this county. When the Civil War was over the soldiers from Adams County, those of them who had not been left upon southern fields of battle, returned to their homes. But the great

majority of them had been changed in their political faith, by the arduous duties of war; they were no longer Democrats. They found their old fathers at home of the old faith. Much bitterness was thus developed even in the homes.

About this time the Legislature of Ohio passed an enactment authorizing the county seat of the county to be established at such a point as a majority of the voters might select. The citizens of Manchester went forth crying, "Here is your chance to give back to us what has been stolen from us." The people of West Union, the then county seat, answered, "We were born with the county seat; you will not take our birthright from us, will you?" A bitter campaign ensued.

It was discovered that at that time there was no statute of the State of Ohio making it any offense to either buy or sell votes; in fact, there was no such statute until about 1889. Each of these villages sought to influence enough voters its way by the use of money. It is reported that they paid for votes as high as $75 apiece. One able, influential citizen states that he was offered $200 to move from one of these places to the other and keep his mouth shut. At this election money flowed like water. When the election was over some of the staid, substantial citizens sought to prosecute those who had been engaged in the nefarious business, but upon consulting attorneys they found that there was no law applicable to the case. The politicians then woke up. These young men, who had bared their breast to southern bullets in the Civil War, believed and stated that they had some right to have a voice in the form of government under which they should live. They went to their wealthy brothers, procured them to become candidates, and sought and pursued the same methods used in the county-seat election. Their old fathers who had remained at home during the war felt that the acts of their sons was almost a sacrilege against the political principles established by their worthy forefathers. They procured their wealthy men to become candidates and followed the same method as the opposition. Thus it became common to use money in elections in Adams County; there was no law to prevent it, and the intensity of political feeling overcame their devotion to principle and to country.

As the years rolled on the custom grew until everybody and everything were saturated with corrupt, degrading political methods. There was nothing so high and sacred that this corrupt influence did not trail in the dust and destroy if a vote could be made thereby. It laid its unholy hands on the school, the church, the home; it came to the point where father purchased sons and sons purchased their fathers, and sometimes their grandfathers. It became so emboldened, backed by the spirit of partisanship, that it stood over the ballot box and with bills in the hands of the purchaser, in the presence of the judges of election, paid the bribed voter as he deposited his ballot in the box. It placed the right of suffrage upon the block in the county seat in the presence of the prosecuting attorney and sheriff, the mayor and marshal of the village and the voters assembled, offering it for sale and sold it to the highest bidder. The schoolteacher held his position because of his political pull. The sanctuary of the church frequently witnessed that the worshipers were practically all of either one or the other political faith. The minister during a campaign was especially guarded in what he might say. The citizenship bought the necessities of life along the line of politics;

there was nothing in the business, professional, or social life of the people that was not corrupted by the influence.

You may ask, then, how in the world this change came about? From whence came the inspiration that brought about the county's cleansing? Let me assure you that the credit does not belong to me. My story will be most unfair to the people of my county if my part in this tragedy is omitted. In my early political career I participated in these degrading practices. When a boy in school my teacher asked some of us boys if we desired a certificate to teach. We replied, "Certainly, teacher; but how can we obtain it?" He replied that if a certain candidate was elected probate judge that fall that a certain person would be appointed school examiner and we would be given teacher's certificates. We said, "Teacher, we can not vote; what can we do to help?" He then gave us the names of men in our township whose votes could be influenced by the use of money, told us how their ballots should be marked, and furnished us the money with which to do the work. We followed instructions. While our fathers and mothers thought we were snugly tucked away, fast asleep in our little beds, we were running over the hills and hollows buying votes like little heathens. The politicians did not suspect us, but watched each other thinking that everything was all right, until the votes were counted. We ran our man 71 votes ahead of his ticket in our precinct. He was elected by 37 votes in the county. Our teacher's friend was appointed school examiner and we all received teacher's certificates. None of the credit for this moral awakening belongs to me. It belongs to another class of the citizenship; it belongs to that class of citizens from whom has sprung the inspiration of every great moral uplift since this old world began. It sprung from the God-fearing noble-hearted women of the county.

The women of the county, realizing the destructive influence of this practice on her father, brother, husband, son, and sweetheart, fought it with all the power they possessed. The effort of the womanhood of the county to stamp out this nefarious practice finally began to have effect. Some of us men began to realize the horrible conditions, resulting from this traffic. We sought to break down the traffic by persuasion, by calling attention to its destructive influence in public addresses, at soldiers' reunions, Sunday-school celebrations, and other places where the citizenship were assembled. The men that were awakened to a realization of the conditions were increased to such numbers and were so persistent in their efforts that the politicians sought their counsel and support. By their efforts an agreement was arranged between the candidates of the Democratic and Republican Parties whereby they agreed not to furnish or permit the expenditure of money for the bribing of electors, and placed on deposit in one of the banks the sum of $10,000 with which to prosecute any person who violated the election laws. This resulted in a clean election that fall. But this nefarious practice had become too deeply rooted in the political fiber of the county to be easily eradicated. A certain portion of the purchasable votes, together with some of the politicians who had been in the habit of handling the funds, saw the opportunity of getting their fingers on this money thus taken away from them. Their wail was long and loud, and they threatened political extinction of every candidate who had advocated

this agreement. We then had the wonderful spectacle of the candidates of each of these parties riding over the county telling these voters that it was a nasty, dirty, mean, low trick of the other fellow, and that if the good Lord forgave them they would never be caught in such an agreement again. Politician and vote sellers who were opposed to the agreement did not know who was responsible therefor; some of them scratched one candidate and some another, with the result that the scratching was about even and nobody was really hurt by this effort to break down the agreement.

The next campaign a similar agreement was entered into by the candidates. Politicians and vote sellers got wise; they called a mass meeting of the vote sellers in one township, at which there was more than 100 assembled. One old, wise guy said to the boys in the meeting, "Boys, we must stand together; if we will all scratch the party whose name appears first on the agreement they will never be able to get anybody to sign first again." They adopted this policy with the result that the party's candidates, whose names first appeared on the agreement, were wiped off the political map at that election; thereafter you could get no one to sign the agreement first. We had the Alphonso-Gaston act. The Democrats would say to the Republicans, "I beg of you first, my dear Alphonso;" the Republicans replied, "I pray that you proceed first, my dear Gaston." No one would sign first, and the traffic became as bad if not worse than before.

About this time Judge Henry Collings, judge of the common pleas court of the county, one of the ablest and best men that ever graced the bench in the State of Ohio, died. It fell to my lot to succeed him, by appointment from the governor of the State, in the month of April. This appointment was to last until a successor to Judge Collings should be elected and qualified. The Republican Party, of which I was a member, nominated me for election as his successor.

The Democratic politicians, a short time prior to the election, saw their chance to play politics. We may add that the Republican politicians would have done the same thing had the opportunity been presented to them. They came to me and stated that I should show by my acts what I had been preaching from the public platform by my words, and they presented to me an agreement similar to the agreements formerly had, and demanded that my signature be attached thereto to start the agreement. I signed it. The other candidates of both parties followed with their signatures. The blame for this agreement was immediately placed upon me. The politicians and vote sellers in every nook and corner of the county took up the cry against me, with the result that my defeat seemed certain.

The good womanhood of the county told me that the Lord always provided and took care of those who did right. My answer was, "That if He took care of me during that campaign He would have to go some." But I am firmly convinced that this saying is true.

The Republicans in that campaign had gone to the great State of New York and selected as their standard bearer for the office of President of this mighty Nation of ours that wonderful exponent of the rights of people, Theodore Roosevelt. He swept this Nation and the subdivision of my judicial district in which I was a candidate, taking me into office on his political coat tail. My admiration for "Teddy" has been unbounded ever since.

The people had been assured by me that if I was elected I would do all I could to break up this nefarious practice. My election had been clean. The unexpired term for which I had been elected required that my successor should be elected in two years. My duties during a great part of this time required me to be in an adjoining county; however, I was renominated as my own successor by my party.

My official duties kept me out of Adams County most of the time during this second campaign. Returning home about a week before the election, a committee of Democratic politicians met me at the railroad station and asked that an agreement, similar to the one entered into in my first campaign, be signed by me. They took occasion to remind me that my judicial position demanded my signing this agreement. I signed it. Upon reaching my home at the county seat some 14 miles from this station, my wife informed me that the executive committee of my party desired my presence at the Republican headquarters at once. Upon reaching these headquarters the information was given me that my action in signing this agreement was a violation of the rules of political etiquette in that county, and that unless my name was withdrawn from this agreement and my activities against the spending of money as it was spent in that county was stopped that my defeat was inevitable. In fact, some of the committee stated that they would use their personal efforts to bring about this result. Our answer to this was that "We would hold our office as judge for a sufficient length of time after the election to see that those who violated the election laws were brought to the bar of justice and properly punished, and we proposed to do so if money was illegally used at that election without regard to the consequences," and left the committee.

Again the corrupt politicians and the vote sellers assailed the position that we had assumed and began a vigorous campaign to make certain of defeating me, and on the last day before the election in which a vacancy on the ticket could be filled every candidate on the Republican ticket of Adams County resigned from the ticket because of the fact of the elimination of money from the election. The resignations were handed in at about 3.30 that afternoon, leaving the time from that until midnight to obtain new candidates and have them properly certified and placed upon the ticket. This was done. Again it looked as though we were certainly defeated, and again was it clearly vindicated that those who assume the right attitude in matters of great public concern need not fear the consequences. To the surprise of everyone a very large number of old-line, moss-backed Democrats, who had not scratched their tickets for so long that they had almost forgotten how, came over and gave us their support, not only by their votes but by their influence and work. The result was that we were not only reelected by receiving a majority of votes in the subdivision of the judicial district from which we were elected, but received more votes than any candidate in it save one.

About this time the arrangement for the judges of this district necessitated the change of our home from West Union, in Adams County, to the city of Portsmouth, in Scioto County, and we were required to hold the courts of Scioto County and a large part of the terms of Lawrence County, adjoining, while another judge of the subdivision held practically all of the court of Adams County. There

being no resident judge in this county, and the associate judge not knowing the counties as well as we, the practice broke forth again in all of its fury. In the fall of 1910 it fell to our lot to hold the fall term of court in the county. At this time court was opened, a grand jury was charged and began its labors. In the afternoon of the first day the prosecuting attorney came to the court and gave us the information that he was utterly powerless to obtain indictments against any person living in the county entitled to cast a vote at the election, stating that the Republicans would not indict a Republican and the Democrats would not indict a Democrat. Under these conditions the court was adjourned until after the election. The grand jury was finally discharged and we returned to our homes in the city of Portsmouth. The next morning after the election the newspapers carried the story of the large expenditure of money for the debauching of the electorate of Adams County on the day of the election. Secret Service men were placed in two townships to obtain information. It had been so common to buy and sell votes in this county that the vote buyers and vote sellers after an election would meet at the little country stores and other places and discuss the amount of money paid and the political tricks enacted in order to secure votes. It was not infrequent that conversation something like the following would take place between a number of these vote sellers congregated at some public place: One would say, "Wall, Bill, how much did you get for your vote?" "Why, Frank, I got $5 for my vote and a drink of liquor." Another one would speak up and say, "Gee whiz, boys, you ought to see me; I got $12.50 from Tom." The other two would pipe out in chorus, "Tom pay you $12.50? He told us he would't pay over $5 to anybody." Another one would say, "Well, Tom paid me $5, and then I sold to the other side for $10."

From these conversations and talking with these people these Secret Service men had no trouble in obtaining the necessary data for the investigation.

On the 13th day of December following, court reassembled. It had become public that an investigation into the bribery at this election was to be had. Letters from all classes of politicians, high and low, rich and poor, came to the court, some of them containing threats, some of them containing pleas, some containing appeals; some pointed out that the investigation must necessarily be a failure, and the result would be the lining up of these vote sellers for the Democratic Party, making the county, the judicial, senatorial, and congressional district Democratic.

One of the dangers to a successful investigation was the strong political prejudice existing in the minds of the better class of the citizenship of both political parties. The prosecuting attorney of the county was a Republican, and while the court did not desire that he should be sick, yet if he had to be sick that was the best time so far as this investigation was concerned. This authorized the court to appoint a prosecuting attorney. The court appointed a little, short, Scotch-Irish attorney, Will. P. Stephenson, who was at the time chairman of the Democratic executive committee of the county, but who had caught the inspiration for a better citizenship and had refused to become a participant in the debauching of the electorate that year.

Under the laws of the State of Ohio the court can order the sheriff or the court baliff to select a grand jury of 15 persons from the bystanders. The sheriff was called in by the court and the prosecuting attorney and informed that 15 men, whose honesty and integrity could not be questioned, would be required to compose a grand jury, to be called the next day. He, together with the prosecutor and court, selected the names of 15 such persons, being 7 Republicans, 7 Democrats, and 1 Prohibitionist. These men were notified to be present in the courtroom at a certain hour. When this hour arrived the court was opened and the sheriff was directed to select the jury from the bystanders. He called the 15 names selected by himself, the prosecuting attorney, and the court. Hon. Lucian J. Fenton, ex-Congressman from the district, a Republican, was sworn in as foreman of the grand jury.

There was a man by the name of Jesse Grooms, living at West Union, the county seat, who had received money for his vote, and seemed to take pride in telling the public that he had sold his vote, and he did not care who knew it. The prosecuting attorney had some of the people that he had told subpœnaed before the grand jury and an indictment was returned against him. The Secret Service men gave their testimony, and other citizens that had some information, from which the grand jury returned 31 indictments.

When it was learned that an investigation was to be made by the grand jury into the use of money at that election, the politicians and vote sellers of the county got busy. It was agreed among them that they would forget when called upon as to the buying and selling of votes. The bank cashiers, members of the respective party committees, and some of the vote buyers were called before the grand jury. From the cashiers of the banks it was learned something of the amount of money that went into the hands of the respective committees, from these committees was obtained the information of the amount of money put into the campaign by the respective parties, and the details of the distribution of this money was given to the grand jury; but the vote buyers, when called before the grand jury, seemed to have lost their recollection. They said when replying about the purchase of votes that they were very busy on the day of the election; that they had no special reason to know just what took place; that they did not expect to be called upon to give the information, and consequently they could not remember just the names of the persons to whom they paid the money that had been given them.

These 31 indictments were returned on Friday and the grand jury was discharged until the next Monday morning. The politicians got very busy in the meantime. All kinds of letters and threats were sent to the court and prosecuting attorney. The court was informed that citizens were assembling in some of the townships and that a mob or riot would probably be the result. The next move, after the adjournment of the grand jury, was to send out the sheriff and tell Mr. Grooms that the court desired to see him. He came into court and said to the judge that he understood that he was wanted. He was informed that it was reported on the streets that he claimed to have received money for his vote. He said the information was correct. The indictment was read to him and he said he was guilty. The court then said to him that the court, prosecuting attorney, and the grand jury were investigating the use of money in that election;

that they did not desire to be severe, but that they were going to use their best efforts to break up the practice in the county; that they knew there was a belief in the minds of the people of the county that it would be impossible to enforce this law and procure convictions for its violation; that if the persons who were guilty would do as he had done, come into court and confess their guilt, leniency would be shown in the fixing of the penalty to be imposed, but if violators of the election laws undertook to escape conviction, and sought to avoid punishment by entering into a combination with other violators and agreeing to withhold the facts from the court and jury, that they might expect, upon conviction, severe punishment to be meted to them. The court sentenced the defendant, Grooms, to pay a fine of $25 and costs, disfranchised him for a period of five years, and committed him to the workhouse at Cincinnati, Ohio, for the period of six months, and until such fine and costs were fully paid, and then suspended the workhouse sentence and the fine and costs imposed, except that he was required to pay $10 thereon; this suspension to be in effect during his good behavior, and then excused him on his own recognizance, giving him an opportunity to raise the $10.

The prosecuting attorney and court selected six names from the 31 persons that had been indicted by the grand jury, three from the Republican side and three from the Democratic side, persons whose presence from the community could best be spared—unmarried men who were not factors in the progress of the community. Writs were placed in the hands of the sheriff for the arrest of these persons. On the Saturday morning following when court opened these six persons were present in court. The court said to one of them with whom the court was well acquainted, "Why, Bill, what are you doing here?" This fellow, a sort of a happy-go-lucky, indolent, easy sort of a chap, with a grin on his face, replied to the court, "The sheriff brought me in and says I am charged with selling my vote." Thereupon the court said to him, "Now, Bill, you thought you would put one over on the court and grand jury, didn't you?" The court had learned in the meantime that the vote buyers, who had been before the grand jury, had gone to their homes and told the persons whose votes they had purchased that they had had a lapse of memory when testifying before the grand jury, and that they could not remember the names of any persons to whom they had paid money for their votes. These vote sellers felt that they had gone scot free. The court said to Bill, "You thought you had put one over on us, didn't you? The fellow that bought your vote told you last night, didn't he, that he didn't tell on you; he said to you that when he was before the grand jury he couldn't remember your name, didn't he, Bill?" And without waiting for an answer to the inquiry the court continued: "Bill, you didn't know, did you, that the court and prosecuting attorney and grand jury know that you got $12.50 for your vote? That it was paid to you over at Smith's lumber yard about 12 o'clock the night before the election and that you received $1 extra to pay to a Grooms boy? You didn't know, did you Bill, that the court and prosecuting attorney and grand jury had knowledge of these facts?" Bill looked up sheepishly and said, "No, sir, I didn't, judge; I didn't know you know'd that." The court replied: "Well, we know all about it,

Bill," and Bill's answer was, "I guess you do." The indictment was read to Bill and he was asked what his plea was, and he said, "I am guilty."

The other five thereupon entered their pleas of guilty. Then the court said to them: "Boys, I am sorry for you; I am sorry that anyone has to be punished; but it seems that you are the goats in this case. There is a belief in the minds of many people in this county that the law against the bribing of the electorate can be violated with impunity; that under the conditions existing here in this county conviction of violators of this statute can not be had. This court and grand jury owes it to the people of this county and to the State to disprove this idea and to establish the fact that it is possible to convict and punish violators of this statute, the same as it is of any penal statute of the State. The court and grand jury had hoped that the violators of this law at the recent election would not undertake to thwart justice, but the information has come to the court that secret meetings have been held among this class of the citizens; plans have been laid whereby perjury is to be added to the offense of open and willful bribery at the election and carried on publicly, openly, flagrantly, without let or hindrance. It is the intention of those engaged in this prosecution to break down this nefarious business, and the court will, if necessary, inflict the severest penalty provided by law for the punishment of the offenders. It is necessary that the court inflict such punishment on you boys as will warn other violators of the danger of withholding from the court and grand jury the facts within their knowledge. Had you come into court and entered your plea of guilty and been fair with the court and the officials, the court would have exercised leniency toward you. You have not seen fit to do this, but rather have taken the chance of entering into this unlawful combination and conspiracy to thwart justice. You and each of you will therefore be adjudged to pay a fine of $200 and the costs of prosecution, and are disfranchised for the period of five years, and are committed to the workhouse in Cincinnati, Ohio, for the period of nine months and until your fine and costs are fully paid." And the court added, "This sentence is only the beginning of what will happen to other persons who are guilty, alike with you, if they fail to come into court of their own volition and give the court the facts as they know them. Mr. Sheriff, take the prisoners to jail; see that they begin the serving of their sentences at once." The court then adjourned until the Monday morning following.

Nothing was talked about in the county except the action of the court in this matter. The telephones from the county seat told the story in every precinct, township, and village, and there were but few citizens who did not know the result that Saturday afternoon. The acts of the court did not lose anything in being repeated. It was pointed out that young Grooms, who had gone into court voluntarily, as the public thought, had gotten off very easy; that he was permitted to go and would be required to pay only $10 and be disfranchised, while the other boys, who had been brought in by the sheriff, were not only disfranchised but had a fine of $200 and nine months in the workhouse standing over them.

The citizenship began to wake up to the fact that this law could be enforced. The vote buyers and the vote sellers no longer trusted each other, each fellow began to look out for himself. Some threats

were made against the court. Some went to the extent of calling up by long-distance phone the friends of the court in his home town and telling them of the danger to which the court, prosecuting attorney, and members of the grand jury were laying themselves liable.

The judge, in returning to the county seat to hold court the next Monday morning, took an early train which arrived at Adams County at the little station of Peebles, 14 miles from the county seat, about 5 o'clock in the morning. At this season of the year it was yet dark when the train arrived. As the court was stepping down from the train, he noticed a crowd of men standing out in the darkness and one of them said "Hello, Judge." The court thought, well here is the mob sure enough, and in order to ascertain why these men were there he replied, "Well, boys, what are you doing here this cold, snowy morning?"—for it was a cold morning and snow covered the ground. They replied, "Judge, we have come to plead guilty." The court alighted from the train and told the boys that he could not accept their pleas there, but they must go to the hotel where they could get some fire and light. On arriving at the hotel these men were told that the court did not know whether they had been indicted or not, but if they were willing to enter their pleas and let the records show that the pleas were entered after the indictment was returned that the court would accept them, and pass sentence. This they agreed to do. They were each given the same sentence as had been given to Grooms, the first man to appear, and permitted to go home.

After passing sentence on these 31 individuals and eating breakfast the court started in a rig for the county seat, 14 miles away. He found the road full of people in all kinds of vehicles, some walking, some in buggies, some in road wagons, some horseback—all headed toward the county seat. On reaching West Union, the county seat, he found the town full of vehicles and people; in fact, the sheriff had to make the crowd stand back until the court got out of his conveyance.

The courthouse having been burned the spring before, court was being held upstairs in the sheriff's residence. It was necessary for the sheriff to put a deputy at the foot of the stairs to keep those who sought to enter their pleas of guilty from breaking the stairs down, and a deputy had to be stationed at the door of the room where court was being held to keep them from mashing the door in—all anxious to enter their pleas of guilty and tell all they knew about the use of money in the election. The court passed sentence that day on 241, and a great many of those who came were compelled to stay over night because of the lack of time for the court to receive their pleas and pronounce their sentence. These facts went out over the county by way of telephone. The vote buyers began to wake up. The telephone of the prosecuting attorney and the court began to ring, and these parties that had been in and didn't remember to whom they had paid the funds that they had in their hands on election day were now begging to come in and tell the grand jury. They said that when they went home and reflected the matter over, they had been able to recall the names of a large number of voters to whom they had given money. It was easy after this to obtain all the facts; the vote sellers and the vote buyers were both eager to give up all the information they had in reference to this practice. One man,

of his own volition, living some 14 miles from the county seat, made eight different trips, so that he would be sure to tell of all of the persons to whom he had paid money at the election.

When the probe was over sentence had been passed upon 1,961, or 26 out of every 100 voters there were in the county. One of the interesting facts in connection with this investigation is the fact that the oldest dry precinct in the county had the smallest per cent of vote sellers, there being only 3 per cent of the electors of that precinct who had sold their votes at the election, while the precinct that had been the last to give up its saloons had the greatest per cent of disfranchised persons, there being 51 per cent of the total voters in this precinct who entered their pleas of guilty of having sold their votes.

When the probe was over, it had been clearly demonstrated that the law could be enforced. The county has since had clean elections. Not only this county but the counties of southern Ohio, in which the practice had gained foothold, eliminated the practice. The public generally, with but a single exception, welcomed the banishment of this nefarious business. This exception was the liquor interest. It sought to nullify the effect of this investigation by restoring these disfranchised persons to citizenship through an act of the legislature of the State. James E. Cox was governor of the State. The court called upon the governor and frankly told him the facts. The liquor interests were powerful enough and had influence enough in that legislature to enact the bill that they had proposed, but Gov. Cox, although of different political faith from the court, had the backbone, manhood, and respect for his office and the good of the community to veto the measure, thus setting a noble example of good citizenship by the highest official of the great State of Ohio.

We earnestly hope that there may be a great many more officials who, like Gov. Cox, shall put patriotism above partisan advantages.

This story will be incomplete without the mentioning of the aid and encouragement given by the womanhood of the county and of the State to the officials who made this investigation. They gave us encouragement by letters, telegrams, and telephone messages, and by their personal statements. To the efforts and influence of womanhood belongs the credit for whatever advancement has been made in the purification of the politics of that county. An inspiration, we may say, that has not been confined within the bounds of Adams County, Ohio, but whose beneficial influence has gone farther, and still farther, until to-day it stands at the doors of the halls of Congress and seeks to be embodied into statutory enactment that shall wipe from the election of this fair land of ours the many corrupt practices that have been tolerated in the past.

We believe that the Members of this Congress have heard the call and will respond to this noble cause brought about by the untiring efforts of the noble womanhood of Adams County, Ohio.

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